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Mission permanente du Portugal
Genève

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

45TH SESSION

- ITEM 12 -

Right of Reply

Mrs Ana Martins Gomes, on behalf
of the Portuguese Delegation

Geneva, 07th Mars 1989

Mr Chairman,

The statement made yesterday by the distinguished Representative of Indonesia that the people of East Timor have already exercised their right to self-determination is in total contradiction with resolutions of the General Assembly of the United Nations - namely Resolution 31/53, of 1/12/76, and Resolution 32/34 of 28/9/77, as recalled time and again before the Commission on Human Rights by our delegation and several other delegations.

In his right of reply of yesterday, the distinguished observer delegation of Indonesia persisted in abusing the memory and the capacity of assertion of facts of this Commission.

We feel therefore no need to restate why, how and by whom the people of East Timor have been prevented from exercising their inalienable right to self-determination and other basic human rights so far, and why Portugal is still today the administering power of East Timor, as the annually renewed debate before the "Committee of the 24" demonstrates. Allow me just to point out that

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two delegations, particularly authorized in this field, those of S. Tomé e Príncipe and Angola, have also expressed before this Commission in this session their solidarity and concern about this denial of the right to selfdetermination to the people of East Timor.

My delegation will not as well elaborate further on what selected and escorted visitors brought by the occupying authorities can see or cannot see in East Timor, leading one of them to say, as the Indonesian delegation cited, that "There are more Fretilin problems in Darwin than in East Timor". We will only quote the reporter of the National Geographic Magazine, in its edition of last January:

"The FRETILIN threat and the presence of the army remain large question marks. Col. Yunus Yosfiah, the local military commander at the time of my visit, termed the problem "a little bit of bandits in the bush." His command's total strength, he said, consisted of only four battalions - approximately 4,000 men - two of which were engineering units on road-building duty. But Yosfiah neglected to mention that another command of 14 battalions - 12,000 men - was reportedly bivouacked in the east, where we were not permitted to go."

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According to this estimation, at least 16,000 men of the occupying army would be stationed in East Timor. 16,000 soldiers for a population of less than 600,000 people. What for, if there are no problems, we ask?

Mr Chairman,

Allow me to state that my delegation has appreciated the concrete informations provided, for the first time in such a detailed manner, by the distinguished Representative of Indonesia in his right of reply, concerning 8 individuals brought to trial as a result of the massive arrests which took place in East Timor last October and November, as my delegation had pointed out. We note as well that the distinguished observer delegation, although alleging misuse and quotation out of context, does not deny the contents of the Pastoral Note of Monsignor Belo, Bishop of Dili, East Timor, on December 5th, which my delegation and others have also brought to the attention of this Commission.

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Finally, Mr Chairman, allow me to reaffirm our sincere hope that the publicized opening of East Timor from 1st January 1989 on, will indeed mean free movement from and within the whole territory and free access to it for all East Timorese and for foreign visitors.

Portugal would like to see an end to the sad situation described by Juliet Rix in the newspaper "The Guardian" last 22nd of February, "Many Timorese are afraid to speak to foreigners for fear of subsequent interrogation, which may still involve physical as well as mental abuse. The openness is fragile."

We urge the Indonesian authorities to allow humanitarian non governmental organizations and international media to have free access to the whole territory of East Timor.